



**Axel Lieber**  
**«Kopf und Kragen»**  
**24.04. - 05.06.2021**

At first, we think we're in a showroom. Using a clever shelving system, precisely selected works are shown that enter into relation with one another.

On a wooden construction, an exhibit cabinet collects various objects in different sizes, materials, and shapes. For example, *Short Cuts Hocker*, a stool in the smallest possible format, that seems strangely shrunken. All that remains of the original seating are the corners, and they provide the new sitting surface: the legs have been adapted to the smaller dimensions. Almost accidentally, shoe eyelets are threaded onto a shoe lace that becomes a rope ladder when hung over a wooden stick. In *Yesterday, Today was Tomorrow*, in turn, the visitors encounter a pair of pants with a waistband that is much too large in comparison to the smallish opening for the feet.

The current exhibition by Axel Lieber at Galerie Mark Müller is entitled *Kopf und Kragen*. The reference is to the German saying "um Kopf und Kragen reden," literally "talking around your head and collar," meaning that the speaker is digging his or her own ditch with incautious remarks, even bringing him or herself into danger. Axel Lieber's presentation is by no means suspected of bringing itself in danger, on the contrary. Beside the already mentioned installational exhibit, the show collects additional works in the space, primarily placed on the walls. The exhibition with a retrospective feel covers a period of over thirty years, whereby it is not immediately clear which works are newer or older.

The element in common is, however, Axel Lieber's work process, which is founded in his sculptural practice. Although Lieber takes recourse to everyday objects, he treats them with the classical work techniques of the sculptor. By removing material, the artist explores the structure and inherent qualities of the original object. On the one hand, he reveals the matrix of the individual elements and thus opens new perspectives on everyday items. Lieber's process of gutting leads not to an emptying: rather, the newly created spaces are given a new meaning and filled with new content. Here, the location in the space plays a central role. In Axel Lieber's oeuvre, the sculpture has long since left its pedestal and moves as if self-evidently at the intersection of architecture, design, and performance. Fragments reassemble associatively, enter into relationships with one another and generate spatial worlds all their own.

*In the Distance the Shelves Rode Three Shadows of Blue* hints at reminiscences of the pedestal. High up near the ceiling, the artist places small shelves on which various boxes and frames are arranged. The top side is each colored in various shades of blue and casts gentle colored shadows on the ceiling. Depending on the lighting situation, the ephemeral play of lights is sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker. With these poetic stagings, Axel Lieber expands the concept of contemporary sculpture and at the same time provides variants for immaterial sculpture.

**Barbara Ruf**